

MAY: MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

– What Caregivers Need to Know –









The Basics

Mental Health Awareness Month was started in 1949 with the goal to raise awareness of the impact that mental health disorders can have on the well-being of individuals, children, families, and communities. Click [here](#) to learn more!

What can caregivers do to raise Mental Health Awareness?

- Understand the basis of mental health: Our mental health is determined by our biology, life experiences (i.e., trauma), and family history. And it is a key factor in the way we think, feel, and act. Some warning signs that our mental health is suffering can be:
 - Change in sleep habits, sleeping too much or not enough, feeling like nothing matters, experiencing severe mood swings, and Inability to complete daily/routine tasks. Learn more [here](#)
- Click on the links here to learn about some common mental health disorders: [Depression](#), [Anxiety](#), [ADHD](#), and [PTSD \(Post Traumatic Stress Disorder\)](#)
- Learn how to talk to youth about their mental health.
 - Have frequent conversations, let them ask you questions, and listen and validate their experiences. Learn more [here](#)
- Set an example for your family! Take care of your mental health.
 - Set realistic goals/expectations for yourself, take care of your body (healthy food, regular movement, sleep enough), Avoid alcohol and other drugs, Learn more [here](#)
- Attend a DC Government sponsored event this month, such as Wellness Wednesdays and Poster Contest. Register [here](#)!

Areas to focus on to improve mental health:

Practice Mindfulness	Eat Healthily	Exercise
 <p>Focus all your attention on the present moment without passing judgment about how you're feeling or what you're experiencing, accepting things the way they are and being in the present.</p>	 <p>An unhealthy diet causes our bodies' ability to cope with stress and stress can lead to unhealthy eating habits, creating a vicious repeating cycle, leading to weight gain and an overall decrease in self-confidence.</p>	 <p>Anything that gets you moving will tend to improve your mood and, according to the Mayo Clinic, just 30 minutes of activity for three to five days a week can alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety.</p>
 <p>Keep a Gratitude Journal</p> <p>Had a good day? Write it down! Studies show that keeping the positive in life, whether it's daily or weekly, and taking note of the good can lower stress and foster a positive outlook on life.</p>	 <p>Practice Positive Self-Talk</p> <p>Similar to mindfulness, positive self-talk is about finding the positive and focusing on a sense of optimism, hope and joy in everyday life. By rejecting those negative messages that may have crept in.</p>	
 <p>Give Back</p> <p>Volunteering is a win-win for everyone involved. Studies have shown that, by meeting the social needs of others, helping to alleviate depression, as well as lowering stress, anxiety and anger.</p>	 <p>Step Outside</p> <p>Take daily exercise, just spending a short time outdoors and away from screens can have a huge effect on our mental health. And being in nature helps our brains to naturally relax.</p>	 <p>Seek Help</p> <p>Unfortunately, even your best efforts may not be enough, in which case, it's time to seek out the professionals. And remember, seeking help is the first step on the path to wellness, something we all want.</p>

Additional Resources

- [NPR](#) on Mental Health
- [Teen Health Matters](#)
- Youth Mental Health [First-Aid](#)
- [Check-in](#), Resources for Parents